

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE
VETERANS RELIEF FUND
OF
CLARK COUNTY

December 2004

**Approved by Clark County Board of Commissioners via resolution No: 2004-12-15
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RCW 73.08 Veterans Relief, Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, chapter 2.29 Veterans Relief, Veterans Resource Committee By-Laws

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL VETERANS RELIEF FUND

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Overview:** This document has been developed to provide guidance for the use of the Clark County Veterans Relief Fund (VRF). The VRF was developed to provide assistance to indigent veterans and their dependent families. The fund was developed in accordance with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 73.08 and Clark County Ordinance Title 2 Administration and Personnel, chapter 2.29 Veterans Relief.

Assistance from the fund is provided through contracted service officers and community service organizations.

Contracting for the use of the VRF is the responsibility of Clark County through the Community Services Department with the advice of the Veterans Resource Committee. Clark County Board of Commissioners has statutory oversight for the use and expenditures of the fund.

- I.2 Source of Funds:** Washington State law and the Clark County code have established the Veterans Relief Fund as a steady source of tax dollars to be utilized for the needs of indigent veterans and their families. A portion of property tax collected in Clark County is earmarked for the VRF.

- I.3 Clark County Veterans Resource Committee:** The Clark County Veterans Resource Committee is an advisory group appointed by the Clark County Board of Commissioners to serve the veterans of Clark County. The committee is made up of members of Congressionally Chartered Veterans organizations within Clark County. The purpose of the Veterans Resource Committee is to serve and act in the best interest of all Veterans, in cooperation with Clark County and the State of Washington. The Resource committee is also the elected relief committee for each of the chartered veteran's organizations.

Members of the committee are registered with the Clark County auditor through a congressionally chartered veterans organization in October of each year. The registration for the committee is valid for the year from January through December. Each registered member has one vote on the committee.

- I.4 Contracted Services:** The County, with the advice of the VRC, selects contracted organizations through the County's procurement process completed at least once every three years. The County is responsible for all contracts issued through this process.

- I.5 Service Administration:** Eligible veterans may receive assistance through contracted agencies/individuals/organizations. Assistance must be provided to needy individuals without discrimination. Agencies/individuals/organizations agree to comply with all

applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, and ordinances relating to nondiscrimination. Two types of services are provided:

- direct emergency relief through a veterans service officer
- ongoing support and assistance through contracted agencies/organizations/individuals that provide community services to indigent people.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Use of Veterans Relief Fund: Eligibility is required for any service provided through the VRF. Eligibility for use of the VRF is determined by the Veterans Service Officer or contracted agency/organizations/individuals.

2.2 Service Requirements: "Veteran" includes all persons qualified under RCW 41.04.007.

2.3 Documentation of Veterans Status: Documentation includes DD-214, VA Statement of Service (SOS), or if discharged prior to 1950, a Certificate of Discharge. The Veterans Service Officer or agency staff will assist the veteran in completing a request to receive a certified copy of their DD-214 as necessary.

2.4 Spouses and/or Dependent Children: Spouses and/or dependent children of disabled or deceased veterans may apply for any/all benefits. Spouses must not have remarried and dependent children must not have reached their 18th birthday (or 23rd birthday if they are a full-time student).

2.5 Family Member: A family member of a veteran is defined as a wife, husband, veteran's minor children, widow or widower.

2.6 Indigence: Eligible veterans are considered to be indigent if they meet one of the following definitions:

2.6.1 Public Assistance: Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, general assistance, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, Medicaid, or supplemental security income. **Documentation** may include applications or benefit cards for any of the above public assistance programs; or

2.6.2 One-Hundred Fifty Percent of poverty: Receiving an annual (household) income, after taxes, of up to one-hundred fifty percent (150%) or less of the current federally established poverty level, or receiving an annual household income not exceeding a higher qualifying income established by the county legislative authority. **Documentation** may include copies of last three month's check stubs, bank statements, and /or most recent income tax returns.

2.7 Washington State Residency: Veterans or families of deceased veterans must show proof of residency in the State of Washington, for at least 12 consecutive months

preceding the date of application for relief. **Documentation** may include, but is not limited to, Washington Driver's License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements and bank statements.

- 2.8 County Residency:** Applicants must reside in Clark County or shall show proof of moving into Clark County at the date of application. **Documentation** may include, but is not limited to, Washington Drivers License, ID card, utility or other bills, copies of applications for public assistance, rental agreements, and bank statements.

3. DIRECT EMERGENCY RELIEF (through Veterans Service Officer)

- 3.1 Overview:** Clark County utilizes a contracted Veterans Service Officer (VSO) as one method to provide assistance to eligible veterans. Each Veterans Service Officer has access to information regarding community resources, other counties veterans relief fund programs and the Veterans Administration. The VSO is charged with assisting the veteran respectfully and in a timely manner, while ensuring that the funds are used only when other resources have been exhausted.

- 3.2 Method of Payment:** Emergency Assistance is provided through a check payable directly to vendors/landlords/service agencies on behalf of the veteran. Checks are issued at the time eligibility is determined.

- 3.3 Documentation of Costs:** Costs may be documented by invoice, purchase order, receipt or bill.

- 3.4 Rent/Mortgage Assistance:** Payment of one month's rent or one monthly mortgage payment which may include applicable home owner's insurance.

3.4.1 Property: Veteran must be legal property owner or have a rental agreement.

3.4.2. Mortgage: Payment of one month's mortgage, including insurance and taxes, however, late payment or penalty fees can not be paid for with this fund.

3.4.3. Eviction: Veteran must show proof of eminent danger of eviction including but not limited to a foreclosure notice, eviction notice or notice to vacate. The assistance cannot be used to delay eviction; the veteran must be able to sustain rent/mortgage in the months to come.

3.4.4. Rent Limit: The maximum rental assistance is limited to current HUD established Fair Market Rent (attachment A).

3.4.5. Shared Dwelling: In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not immediate family as described in section 2.5) the rental amount will be prorated by the number of people living in the house.

3.4.6. First Month's Rent Assistance: Veteran may receive first-last-month's rent and deposit funding to move into housing. The veteran must be able to sustain

rent in the months to come. Housing costs must meet the HUD established Fair Market Rent (Attachment A).

3.4.7. Temporary Lodging Assistance: A homeless veteran may receive lodging assistance for up to three months prior to admittance into an approved course of treatment. Treatment programs must be state or federally certified. Veteran must show proof of acceptance into treatment program.

3.5 Heating Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$800 per calendar year to be used for payments for heating. The assistance is available only for the utilities used during the months of October through April.

3.5.1 Utilities Notice: Veteran must have a disconnect or final notice from a utility company.

3.5.2 Alternative Heating Methods: In the case of wood, coal, or heating oil, a voucher can be issued for up to the maximum.

3.5.3 Shared Dwelling: In the case of veteran sharing a dwelling with another person (not immediate family as described in section 2.5) the heating assistance costs will be prorated by the number of people living in the house.

3.6 Food Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$200 per 12 month period to be used for emergency food assistance. However, veteran may not receive food vouchers if currently receiving food stamps.

3.7 Transportation Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$50 per month (not to exceed three months) to be used for transportation assistance for appointments for medical or treatment services, social services (SSI, SSDI, DSHS) or job interviews.

3.7.1 Gasoline: Veteran must show proof of vehicle ownership.

3.7.2 Public Transportation: If the veteran does not own a vehicle, bus passes may be issued.

3.8 Prescription Coverage: Veteran may receive up to \$600 per 12 month period to be used for doctor ordered medication. Prescription must be in veteran's name with a price quote from a licensed pharmacy.

3.9 Natural Disaster Assistance: Veteran may receive up to \$500 per 12 month period as a result of damage or loss of personal property due to a natural or catastrophic disaster. A natural or catastrophic disaster is defined as an act of God including, but not limited to tornadoes, wind storms, ice storms, earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, fire, and mud slides. Vehicular accidents as a result of icy or snow-covered roads are not included.

3.10 Burial Assistance: Families of qualified veterans may receive up to \$1,000 to assist with the costs of burial of the veteran. The Veterans Fund can be used to supplement the cost of the burial only, if all other resources have been exhausted.

3.11 Other Assistance: Veteran may receive other assistance not covered under the above sections.

3.11.1 Auto Repair: Repair or parts necessary for the veteran to seek work, attend medical appointments, or maintain employment.

3.11.2 Appliances: Purchase of necessary appliances or repair thereto (refrigerators, furnaces, ranges etc.).

3.11.3 Clothing: Purchase of clothing necessary for a veteran to become or remain employed.

3.11.4 Utilities: Payments for utilities such as electricity, sewer and water.

4. VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

4.1 General: The Veterans Service Officer (VSO) is hired under contract with a qualified Veterans Support Agency such as a congressional chartered service or state recognized organization that provides relief and services and support to area veterans. The VSO is responsible for determining eligibility and issuing vouchers/checks for emergency assistance.

4.2 Certification: The VSO shall be certified as such by a nationally-recognized organization such as the Veterans Administration, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, or any other congressionally chartered organization.

4.3 Screening: The VSO shall screen each individual applying for assistance and determine eligibility and degree of need based on the eligibility and limits of assistance described in this document.

4.4 Community Resources: The VSO will make every effort to collaborate and coordinate with other community services such as food banks, shelters, Veterans Service Organizations, state-funded services and services at the Veterans Administration.

4.5 Reporting: The VSO shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, social security number, address, amount and use of relief. All records must be kept for a minimum of five years.

5. APPEAL and WAIVER PROCESS

5.1 Filing an Appeal or Waiver: The Veterans Resource Committee is responsible for hearing any appeal or dispute of Veterans Service Officer's decision. The Veterans

Service Officer shall determine if each application is in compliance with the Clark County Code and the Policies and Procedures for the Veterans Relief Fund. Any appeals or disputes of the VSO's decision must be made within 15 days of the decision. Appeals should be made in writing, include all supporting documentation, and be mailed to:

Veterans Resource Committee (Appeals)
c/o Clark County Department of Community Services
Veterans Program Coordinator
PO Box 5000
Vancouver, WA 98666

5.2 Determination: A determination as to the outcome of the appeal or waiver will be forwarded to the veteran within 15 days of receipt. All committee's decisions on appeals will be final. All copies of appeals must be sent to the County Department of Community Services.

5.3 Due Process: Section 5.1 and 5.2 in no way limit an applicant's constitutional Right of Due Process of Law. If an applicant desires to continue their appeal beyond the Veterans Resource Committee, they have every right to pursue legal action within the judicial system, however the venue shall be Clark County.

6. CLARK COUNTY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Fiscal Management: The County Department of Community Services acts as the fiscal agent for the Veterans Resource Committee and provides the following assistance:

6.1.1 Monthly Reimbursements: Process monthly reimbursements to the contracted agencies, including VSO, for the cost of assistance provided to the veterans.

6.1.2 Oversight: Provide oversight to ensure accountability of funds. County will make a monthly review of the submitted invoices/checks from the subcontractors to determine if funds are appropriately spent.

6.1.3 Annual Review: Work with the County Auditor's Office to schedule and perform an annual review of the Veterans Relief Fund.

6.1.4 Annual Budget: Develop an annual budget, and process budget adjustments through the Supplemental Appropriation hearing process.

6.1.5 Tracking and Reporting: Compile revenue and expenditure tracking and reporting; perform internal auditing of vouchers and other expenses for compliance with state law and fiscal agency policies and procedures.

6.1.6 Financial Statements: Provide fiscal information to the Veterans Resource Committee, as requested, but at a minimum provide quarterly financial statements, and annual financial reports.

6.2 Administrative Assistance: The County Department of Community Services provides administrative assistance to the Veterans Resource Committee, including the following:

6.2.1 Procurement Process: Prepare an RFP for the Veterans Assistance Fund, following the County's procurement procedures. Ensure that all documentation is on file with the County's Purchasing Department. Assist with developing proposal rating sheets.

6.2.2 Contracting: Prepare subcontracts, reviewed by the Veterans Resource Committee, that allocate funds to assistance organizations awarded subcontracts through the County's procurement process.

6.2.3 Monitoring: Provide subcontractor monitoring following the County's risk assessment process. Ensure oversight and documentation of organizations that make assistance determinations and process costs charged to the Veterans Assistance Fund. Monitoring includes ensuring that direct service providers have standard performance practices in accordance with county code, state and federal laws.

6.2.4 Planning: Assist the Veterans Resource Committee with its planning process and coordination with federal, state and local agencies and related organizations.

6.2.5 Evaluations: Assist the Veterans Resource Committee with evaluations regarding the effectiveness of programs.

7. SERVICES THROUGH CONTRACTED AGENCY

7.1 Overview: Clark County utilizes contracts with area agencies to provide assistance to eligible veterans. Each agency has access to information regarding additional community resources and the Veterans Service Officer.

7.2 Eligibility: Agency staff will insure that a veteran meets the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 2.

7.3 Basic Agency Requirements: A contracted agency must have the following information:

- Washington State Tax Registration Number
- Employer Identification Number/Social Security Number
- Business License
- Proof of professional/general liability and employee fidelity insurance
- Process to conduct criminal background checks on staff who have contact with the public
- Proof that agency's facility/program location is ADA compliant
- Provide for security of veterans information
- Policies and procedures approved and adopted by the agency's Board of Directors
- A copy of the most recent financial statement, audit, or review (including the management letter from the CPA) or alternately, if the agency does not receive an annual audit or review, the most recent financial statements for the agency
- Information on ability to repay any disallowed costs
- A list of all members on organization's governing board
- A copy of the agency's bylaws

7.4 Reporting: The contracted agency shall maintain all records for each veteran who applies for services. Information shall include name, social security number, address along with address of service, type and amount of service.